CLAIMS

1.   A method of upgrading firmware on a computing device comprising:

determining a current version of firmware installed on the computing device;

5   searching a predesignated location for a firmware upgrade;

sending an email notification to one or more predesignated email addresses if the firmware upgrade is found; and

installing the firmware upgrade onto the computing device.

10   2.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the searching further comprises:

comparing the current version of firmware with the firmware upgrade to determine if the firmware upgrade will provide a more recent version of firmware.

15   3.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the searching further comprises initiating a browser application embedded on the computing device.

4.   A method as recited in claim 3, wherein the browser application is stored on and executes on a second computing device coupled to the computing

20   device.

5.   A method as recited in claim 1, wherein installing the firmware upgrade further comprises:

receiving a reply from a recipient of the email notification comprising a user-

25   designated time; and

at the user-designated time, downloading and installing the firmware upgrade onto the computing device from the predesignated location.

6. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the installing the firmware upgrade occurs automatically when the firmware upgrade is found.

5   **7.** A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the predesignated location is a plurality of predesignated locations comprising:

     a URL address accessible via the Internet; and

     a local server address accessible via a local network.

10   **8.** A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the one or more predesignated email addresses comprise a plurality of predesignated email addresses.

     9. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the email notification comprises:

15   a selectable option configured to automatically install the firmware upgrade onto the computing device; and

     information comprising:

         the current version of firmware;

         the location of the firmware upgrade;

20   the cost associated with the firmware upgrade; and

         billing data required to complete an electronic commerce transaction to purchase the firmware upgrade.

     10. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the computing device is 25 embodied as a device selected from a group of devices comprising:

     a printer;

     a scanner;

a copier;

a facsimile machine;

a multifunction peripheral device;

a modem;

5   a cellular telephone;

a personal computer; and

a personal digital assistant (PDA).

11. A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the firmware is device driver software and the firmware upgrade is a device driver upgrade.

12. A computer-readable medium comprising computer executable instructions configured to cause a computer to perform the method of claim 1.

13. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 12, wherein the computer executable instructions are further configured to cause a computer to perform the method of claim 1 automatically on a periodic basis.

14. A computer-readable medium as recited in claim 12, wherein the computer executable instructions are further configured to cause a computer to perform the method of claim 1 at the request of a user.

15. A method of upgrading firmware on a computing device comprising:

predesignating a server location to be searched for a firmware upgrade;

predesignating an email address to which an email notification will be sent when the firmware upgrade is found;

receiving an email notification at the email address, the email notification comprising a selectable option configured to automatically install the firmware upgrade on the computing device from the server location.

5   **16.**   A method as recited in claim 15, further comprising:

in response to a selection of the selectable option, requesting a time at which the firmware upgrade will be automatically installed.

17.   A method as recited in claim 15, further comprising:

10   in response to a selection of the selectable option, requesting billing data required to complete an electronic commerce transaction to purchase the firmware upgrade.

18.   A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the predesignating a server

15   location comprises:

configuring an applet on the computing device with an address location on the server.

19.   A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the predesignating an email

20   address comprises:

configuring an applet on the computing device with an email address for receiving an email notification.

20.   A method as recited in claim 15, wherein the firmware is device driver

25   software and the firmware upgrade is a device driver upgrade.

21.   A computing device comprising:

firmware stored in nonvolatile memory on the computing device; and

an upgrade applet configured to determine the current version of the firmware,

search a predesignated location for a firmware upgrade, send an email notification

5   regarding an available firmware upgrade, and install the available firmware upgrade

in the nonvolatile memory.

22.   A computing device as recited in claim 21, wherein the email

notification comprises:

10   a selectable option to have the available firmware upgrade installed at a user-

designated time; and

information comprising:

the current version of the firmware; and

the location of the available firmware upgrade.

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23.   A computing device as recited in claim 22, wherein the email

notification further comprises:

information comprising:

a cost associated with the available firmware upgrade; and

20   billing data required to complete an electronic commerce transaction to

purchase the available firmware upgrade;

and wherein the selectable option comprises:

a second applet configured to browse to the predesignated location and

install the available firmware upgrade upon completion of the electronic commerce

25   transaction.

24. A computing device as recited in claim 21 embodied as a device selected from a group of devices comprising:

a printer;

a scanner;

a copier;

a facsimile machine;

a multifunction peripheral device;

a modem;

a cellular telephone;

a personal computer; and

a personal digital assistant (PDA).

25. A computing device as recited in claim 21, wherein the nonvolatile memory comprises electrically erasable programmable read-only memory (EEPROM).

26. A system for upgrading firmware comprising:

a computing device having an upgrade applet configured to locate a firmware upgrade and send an email notification regarding the firmware upgrade; and

an email recipient configured to reply to the email notification, the reply comprising a user-designated time at which the upgrade applet will install the firmware upgrade onto the computing device.